

Silverbell Road Task Force Wednesday, February 3, 2010

Summary of Meeting #4

The third meeting of the Silverbell Road Task Force (SRTF) took place from 6:00 to 7:40 p.m. at the Silverbell Golf Course Clubhouse, 3600 North Silverbell Road. In attendance were the following member representatives of the Task Force:

Wain Cooper, Regional Transportation Authority
Kendall Elmer, Pima County Neighborhoods
Barbara Whitaker, City of Tucson Neighborhoods
Sandy Fagan, City of Tucson Neighborhoods
Frank Stryker, City of Tucson Businesses
Bradley Lang, City of Tucson Businesses
Michael Mencinger, Regional Transportation Authority
Angela Wagner-Gabbard, Town of Marana Neighborhoods
Julie Prince, City of Tucson-Pima County Bicycle Advisory Committee
Gale Marsland, Pima County Businesses
Hurvie Davis, Town of Marana Neighborhoods
Robert De La Cerda, City of Tucson Neighborhoods
Midge Hardy, City of Tucson Businesses
Judith Meyer, Pima County Neighborhoods

SRTF member Josh Wright was absent.

Also present were Project Team members:

Andy Dinauer, Project Manager, City of Tucson
Jim Schoen, Project Manager, Kittelson & Associates
Jason Simmers, Lead Engineer, Kittelson & Associates
Scott Leska, Town of Marana Public Works
Rick Ellis, Pima County Department of Transportation
Jose Ortiz, City of Tucson Department of Transportation
Freda Johnson, Meeting Moderator, Rillito Consulting Group
Evelyn Urrea, Community Outreach, Kaneen Advertising & Public Relations

1. Call Meeting to Order – Confirm Quorum

Freda Johnson, meeting moderator, welcomed everyone and announced that a quorum was present.

2. Introductions of SRTF Members and Project Team

Members of the Task Force introduced themselves. Project Team members Andy Dinauer and Jim Schoen introduced themselves as well as did the representatives from Pima County and the Town of Marana.

3. Approval of SRTF Meeting Summary of January 6, 2010

Brad Lang requested clarification of his remarks as reported on page 3, paragraph 4 and asked that a correction be made to the effect that he is concerned that restrictions against tractor trailers should be kept and that there be no short cuts by these vehicles through residential areas. By general agreement, the minutes were accepted by the Task Force as modified.

4. Announcements

Freda Johnson reviewed the Task Force meeting ground rules. Jim Schoen announced that there have been meetings with property owners in the project area. Andy Dinauer reviewed the role of the Task Force emphasizing that there are fixed elements in the project that have been established by the Regional Transportation Authority. Judith Meyer said that the Task Force will not be making decisions, but would provide input on issues of interest or concern. Andy confirmed this. Jim Schoen reported that he had investigated the situation on private property where a trail had been indicated on a map through the Pima Trails Association. He said that it is not an official trail and that property owners are not required to allow hikers or equestrians to use it or to maintain it however Pima Trails requests that property owners allow designated trail use.

5. Selection of Silverbell Road Task Force Chair and Vice Chair

Discussion took place about the advisability of selecting a chair and vice chair for the task force. In general, people said they didn't feel the need for these officers. Andy Dinauer said that the topic could be revisited in the future. He also said that inquiries from the press or media could be referred to him as project manager. It was clarified that anyone on the Task Force should feel free to talk to media representatives. Angela and Julie said that they each have had extensive experience with the media and could help out if needed. By general agreement, the Task Force accepted the arrangement whereby Freda Johnson will moderate meetings.

6. Staff Reports, Presentations and Discussion

Jim Schoen reviewed the corridor alignment alternatives from the point where discussion ended at the January meeting. Copies of maps had been distributed to Task Force members prior to this meeting. Jim invited questions about the southern portion of the project. Angela asked about the status of four residences in the upper left corner of sheet 16. Andy said that the property has been rezoned and approved by Mayor and Council of the City of Tucson. Jim said that the project team had met with the property owner early in the project to discuss right-of-way impacts and access requirements. He indicated that the project team will meet with the property owner again as the preliminary alignment is developed. Gale asked questions about all the power poles and water lines in the project area. Jason Simmers said that by shifting the roadway to the west slightly, many power poles are avoided, however poles will need to be relocated. Jim noted that TEP will need

to relocate these poles and that it is unlikely that the power lines will go underground considering the high voltage (137 thousand volts) and the high cost of undergrounding compared to overhead lines, which would have to be born solely by TEP. Jason acknowledged the presence of large water lines under the east shoulder of the roadway. Gale asked about curb returns at driveways; Jim said that curb returns will be provided at all side streets and commercial driveways. Curb depressions will be provided at individual residential driveways. Wain Cooper expressed concern about handling traffic during construction and that he would like this added to the list of project criteria. Barbara Whitaker asked about the status of the Estes property on sheet 14 and asked if there was an approved drainage easement. Jim said that the planned Estes property improvements have been incorporated into the roadway improvements and that the drainage easement will not be affected. Barbara said that on sheet 13 there is a blind spot coming out of Neosha. Jim acknowledged that this location is a particular concern due to limited sight distance and that the roadway improvements, which will include not only straightening the roadway, but eliminating the dip, will provide adequate sight distance and significantly improve safety. Judith Meyer asked about the Tucson Electric Power (TEP) right-of-way and substation as shown on sheet 12. Jim said that the substation is scheduled to be removed by TEP, likely in conjunction with the Silverbell Road construction. Judith said that she would like to see as many trees along Silverbell as possible. Jim noted that in the design phase of the project, all trees and vegetation that will be impacted by the roadway widening will be inventoried and assessed for salvage potential. Trees, cactus, and other shrubs that can be salvaged will be replanted as part of the project landscaping. Kendall Elmer inquired about the development on the east side of the road north of Goret up to the golf course. He wondered if there is a timetable for development. Andy said he doesn't know of a timetable but the property owner can begin whenever they want.

Jim Schoen said that based on the comments and questions, he believes there are no fatal flaws in the proposed alignment for the southern section and thanked the Task Force for its input. He invited Jason Simmers to run through the northern section of the project beginning at Ina and going south to Camino del Cerro. In the area from Ina to Abington, some right-of-way will be needed from Pima County. From Abington to Belmont, Jason said that some right-of-way is needed on the west side. He said that there is a frontage road in this area. In discussion of the roadway from Belmont to the south there would be a 35-foot shift to the east. He said that the Town of Marana and Pima County own land throughout this area and the boundary is not absolutely clear because of the checkerboard pattern of land ownership. Judith Meyer said she would have a concern if the Task Force consensus is to take private land as necessary. Jason responded by saying that acquiring private property will be avoided wherever possible. Andy elaborated by saying that the City of Tucson has a process for acquiring private property and, as a rule, it does not escalate to condemnation. Jason said that the proposed roadway shift to the east is specifically intended to avoid private property. Angela asked where the flood plain line is. Jason pointed it out and said that the road would be elevated at these locations in order to bring it out of the flood plain. Jason continued by describing that there would be little or no change in the roadway alignment in the vicinity of Orange Grove and Panorama. He said that moving south from Benjamin to Sunset, there is a narrow bridge

to the north of the frontage road. Angela asked if acquisition costs at current market value have been established. Jason said not yet because they need to know the square footage needed. Andy said that he believes the costs of acquisition will be fairly small in terms of privately held parcels. Angela asked how the Task Force can best budget for the proposed alignment. Jim responded by saying that while acquisition costs have not yet been determined, the team is basing the alignment on its understanding of the relative costs to acquire different properties (i.e. undeveloped/developed residential, commercial, and industrial). Jason added that the team is working to get the cheapest alignment, which is why the proposed roadway alignment is shifted to the east to avoid buying residential property. Jim said that as adjustments in the alignment are made at different locations, this information will be brought back to the Task Force. In response to a question, Andy said that the project in the vicinity of Sunset will need to fit in with a separate RTA project to place a bridge at Sunset.

Angela had questions about the height of the 100-year flood event in the vicinity of Sunset Road. Staff said that in this area the flooding is 4 feet deep and the road would need to be raised at least five feet. Brad asked if there were plans to balance property acquisition with archaeological protection and other components of the project. Jason said that the proposed alignment is intended to strike a balance. Brad said that he is concerned about opportunists buying up property in the project area. Andy said that once an alignment has been established and adopted by each jurisdiction, that will restrict opportunists.

Barbara said that she supports the roadway alignment criteria that lead off with safety, floodway issues, minimizing private property acquisition and minimal impacts to slopes on the west side of the roadway. Frank Stryker said that he likes the aesthetics of Silverbell south of Grant. Judith said that she would like to see more vegetation than walls. Jason said that there will be some cuts into slopes in the south section of the roadway. Kendall Elmer asked about the status of the Sunset Road Bridge. Andy said there could be significant channel work and the bridge could be up to 15' high. Pima County is overseeing the Sunset Road project, which is scheduled to be constructed in the 2017-2021 RTA implementation period. Jim noted that the initial evaluation of a new Sunset Road crossing will be getting underway in the next 2-3 months and that the location of the Sunset Road connection will have a significant impact on the elevation of Silverbell Road. Jason continued by describing some alternatives at the Silverbell Nursery and more detail will be brought to the Task Force.

Andy said he would like to know if the Task Force validates the approach on the proposed alignment. Several people said they support it. Barbara said that she supports the criteria and appreciates the effort made to meet with property owners. By general agreement, the Task Force supported the proposed alignment and continued discussion of any variations developed by staff.

Discussion took place about the bike lane and median widths. Jim referred to his memo to the Task Force outlining a consistent 6-foot paved bike lane surface throughout the length of the corridor. A 1-foot gutter will be added between Sunset Road and Ina Road,

per Town of Marana requirements. Several people spoke in favor of this change. Julie thanked Pima County and especially the Town of Marana and said that the Bicycle Advisory Committee supports the continuity of the bike lane. Julie also noted that the BAC supports raised outside curb throughout the entire corridor. Jim referred to the proposed median width of 20 feet as being a compromise between the jurisdictions and that all three jurisdictions will require a continuous 20-foot width. Jim also noted that the 20-foot median is necessary to allow for u-turns and to provide an adequate refuge area for vehicles entering Silverbell Road from a side street or driveway.. Hurvie Davis said he appreciates efforts made to reconcile differences among the jurisdictions with different standards. He said that the key things are to protect public safety and public money. Brad commented that the pedestrian path on the east side is not a sidewalk and he wondered if this path could be extended into the Town of Marana. Jim clarified that both Pima County and the Town of Marana allow for a 20-foot median in scenic roadways and that the Town could extend the path. By general agreement, the bike lane width and the median width proposals were accepted by the Task Force.

The issue of signalized intersection layouts was postponed until the next Task Force meeting.

7. Next Steps

The next meeting of the Task Force was announced to be March 3, 2010.

8. Call to the Audience

Herb Havens, who owns the mobile home park just south of the Silverbell Nursery noted his frustration about lack of coordination from the project team regarding the impacts of the proposed alignment to his property. (Note: This property owner was the first one contacted to discuss impacts to his property which he is planning to redevelop, right-of-way requirements associated with the roadway widening, and access).

Julian Hadland addressed the Task Force on behalf of elderly residents who wish to keep the Silverbell character intact. He said that Calle Concordia is a good model in that it is scenic with no curbs or medians and it's a safe street.

9. Adjournment

By general agreement, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.